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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D. C.

December 12, 1942

FIELD MEMORANDUM NO. 1082

Re: Maintenance and Operation
of Automotive Equipment,
A Plan for the

TO ALL RANKING FIELD OFFICERS:

CONSERVATION OF SERVICE EQUIPMENT

The need for automotive equipment is now greater than ever, yet replacements to our present fleet are no longer available. It is imperative that our transportation equipment be maintained in the safest possible operating condition, and for as long as possible. The difficulty in obtaining sufficient shop equipment and repair parts, and also the increasing shortage of mechanics in government as well as in commercial garages, make our problem even more serious. While we are interested in getting every possible mile out of every piece of equipment, it is imperative that we do not endanger the lives of our personnel by allowing them to operate equipment not in a safe operating condition. To meet the situation, each region, if they have not already done so, should amend or expand a plan of maintenance and operation which will be best suited to the conditions prevailing in that region, the objective in all regions will be to accomplish the maximum of performance. Whether the maintenance work is performed in government or commercial shops, the quality of work must be of a high standard.

It may soon be necessary to redistribute automotive equipment by placing the older units at points which are near repair shops and by assigning the better units to distant work locations. A few units should be held in reserve for loan to work units while their equipment is being repaired or overhauled.

We have had an opportunity to study in detail the plan which is operating satisfactorily in one of the regions, and we find that its program is a combination of arrangements, as follows: (1) State garages, where major repair and overhaul work is performed on all automotive equipment within reasonable proximity. (2) Smaller garages, usually on government-owned land, such as at Research, Nursery, or Land Utilization projects, where facilities are available to render general repair work on equipment for the work locations within accessible distances. (3) Commercial contracts to supplement the foregoing at points which are not within convenient distances to the state or smaller garages, and also for minor repair work and general servicing of the equipment. (4) Regional mechanics who make thorough inspections of equipment in the field at approximately 90-day intervals.

I am asking the regional conservators to give consideration to utilizing the organization or plan which is necessary under the prevailing conditions and circumstances within their respective regions. The facilities already available, or potentially available, will have a bearing on the program to be used.

Regardless of the plan to be followed, the maintenance and operation of our automotive equipment should be held to a high state of efficiency. To insure that this is being accomplished, the equipment must be properly inspected at regular intervals.

An inspecting mechanic should be assigned to each state or other area. This supervising or inspecting mechanic should examine the equipment in the field, direct the correction of approaching defects, and determine the extent and nature of the immediate repairs or overhauls which may be necessary. He should also examine the quality of work which is being rendered by government or commercial mechanics. At times it may be his duty to justify the rejection of a low but incompetent bidder. An important service rendered by the supervising mechanic involves instructing the drivers on points which will enable them to become even more proficient in the operation, care and maintenance of the vehicles which have been entrusted to them. The supervising mechanic should be able to recommend the sectional repair, retreading and recapping of tires at the proper time. To stabilize the wear on tires, he will also give instructions for the switching of tires from wheel to wheel. The supervising mechanic should also be able to train work group safety assistants to make frequent, regular safety inspections of all equipment. Such inspections are usually made at approximately 90-day intervals.

The policy of the Service for the conservation of equipment and tires was set forth in Field Memorandum SCS #1064 on May 13, 1942. Every effort should be made to coordinate the plan of maintenance and operation so as to carry out that policy.

The operator of a government vehicle is responsible for its proper use, according to the condition and capability of the vehicle, and must see that the equipment is in the best possible condition as to tires, lubrication, oil and water, before starting a trip. Any defects developing while on a trip should be reported and corrected immediately upon return, unless it is essential that repairs be made during the trip. All necessary entries will be made by the operators in the SCS-513 booklet, Equipment and Transportation Record, so the supervisory officials and mechanics can readily review the type of attention that is being given to the vehicle.

Inspecting mechanics should be required to report all evidence of misuse, abuse and failure to properly operate and maintain automotive equipment.

The fundamentals of this policy should be brought to the attention of all supervising officials and every driver of our transportation equipment. A minor detail which is overlooked by one of our drivers will diminish the performance of our fleet and endanger the lives of our personnel. The conservation of our transportation equipment is paramount at this time. It necessitates careful consideration and attention by everyone who uses this equipment and can only be achieved through the cooperation of everyone.

We have touched as briefly as possible on the fundamentals of the maintenance and operation of automotive equipment plan, since we know that from time to

time you have received suggestions and instructions from this and other agencies (for example CCC and Bureau of Budget) with regard to conservation and inspection of equipment, motor oil, gasoline, etc. Since by this time we should be conscious of our obligation to preserve equipment and since most Regions have established control and inspection procedure, it is not felt necessary to include a great deal of detail in this memorandum.

J. C. Dykes
Acting Chief

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